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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 001120

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SUBJECT: UN REP SAYS UN STAFF TO GO IN AND OUT OF IRAQ FOR NOW

REF: AMMAN 387

Classified By: Amb. Edward W. Gnehm for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary. Special Representative Ross Mountain said the UN would re-enter Iraq gradually with "in and out" trips from Amman and Kuwait. He confirmed that major UNAMI operations would be based in Amman, while HQ would remain in Cyprus. A February 10 UNAMI donor briefing, co-chaired by Mountain, addressed security and the UN's evolving strategic planning report. Mountain called for greater cooperation with the World Bank and CPA in the UN's strategic plan. End Summary.

UN SPECIAL REP BRIEFS ON HIS IMMEDIATE IRAQ PLANS

12. (C) UN Special Representative Ad Interim Ross Mountain told DCM and Emboffs January 29 that the UN's top Iraq priority was to decide when -- not whether -- to return to Iraq. He added that UNSYG Annan was eager for the UN to return, and hoped to return some international staff quickly to assist the approximately 1,000 national staff in Iraq. Mountain's other goals included establishing closer links between the UN and the Jordan-based NGO community and gearing up humanitarian and development efforts inside Iraq. He intended to work on linking the World Bank and Iraqi ministries to coordinate humanitarian and development efforts and was looking forward to the post-Madrid donor conference scheduled for Feb. 28-29 in Abu Dhabi.

13. (C) Mountain confirmed that the UN hopes initially to return international staff to Iraq on a gradual basis: "in and out" operations with "no mass rush back in." He explained that international staff based in Jordan and Kuwait would be flown in during the day and flown out at night. Mountain advised that although the UN is planning to house its staff at the Canal Hotel and plans were underway to renovate it with sleeping capacity for about 30 people, they did not want to use the Canal Hotel for an extended period.

SECURITY ASSESSMENT

14. (C) Mountain said the UN had lost its "innocence" in the August 19 car bomb attack and that this incident had "traumatized" UN security officials in New York. He confided that he prefers to work out of Amman as opposed to Cyprus and had received full cooperation from the GOJ (he met with the Queen and FM Muasher). Mountain added that it was "easier to do things" from Amman versus Cyprus and expressed stronger confidence in Jordan's security services. However, headquarter's security concerns in Jordan needed to be carefully addressed. DCM provided Embassy's security overview, and offered the full cooperation of the RSO in assessing the security threat and advising on our best practices.

UNAMI BRIEFING: HOW AND WHEN TO IRAQ

15. (C) At a February 10 UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) donor briefing, Mountain reiterated that the issue of a UN return to Iraq was now a question of how and when. He added that plans were underway to return staff to Baghdad, with additional plans for Basra (out of Kuwait) and Erbil. He said a Dutch aircraft would be available in the next few days to move staff in and out of Iraq on a daily basis. Plans at present, Mountain affirmed, were to have Larnaca as its headquarters, with major operations based in Amman. Mountain added that he was leaving for Kuwait that same evening to iron out details for the UN presence in Kuwait.

SECURITY BRIEFING - AGAIN DISMAL

16. (C) UNSECOORD rep again presented a dismal security picture saying that their assessment was based on "bits and pieces" of information from various sources. He said that

the CPA, citing "security" grounds, did not provide complete security information to the UN, and rated the overall security situation as unstable. He cited an increase in the efficiency of attacks, an average of 9.5 military fatalities per week, and the insurgents were now targeting anyone seen cooperating with coalition forces, including university professors who received envelopes filled with bullets, private contractors, the Dutch Embassy, Baghdad International Airport (allegedly attacked with Brazilian-made rockets), and unconfirmed reports that Ayatollah Al-Sistani had survived an assassination attempt.

UN'S STRATEGIC PLANNING REPORT - DRAFT #3

17. (C) Mountain told donors the UN's Strategic Planning Report needed more work, including more consultations with the World Bank and CPA Baghdad. Mountain encouraged all attendees to review the report and offer comments, with special emphasis on detailing cash flow projections to determine when funds would be needed for each individual project. He was concerned about the "credibility" of the final document.

COMMENT

18. (C) The UN is positioning itself in Amman and Kuwait to initiate its gradual, but determined reentry into Iraq. Mountain seemed concerned that the UN might wait too long and find itself "out of the picture."

19. (U) CPA Baghdad minimize considered.

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GNEHM